DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 032 PS 026 348

AUTHOR Parsons, Leslie Cooper; Pierce, Sarah
TITLE The Importance of Program Providers in Predicting Adolescent Mother-Child Interactions in a Center-Based Intervention.
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 5p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Conference on Human Development (15th, Mobile, AL, March 5-7, 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; Child Rearing; Children; *Early Parenthood; Intervention; *Mother Attitudes; *Mothers; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Education; Parent Influence; Parent Role; Parenting Skills; Preschool Education
IDENTIFIERS *Center Based Programs

ABSTRACT

This study examined connections between the quality of the relationship adolescent mothers establish with parenting program providers and the quality of the interactions that these mothers exhibit with their children. The study also compared mother-child interactions of adolescent mothers in a parenting program with those of adolescent mothers in a matched comparison group. No significant differences in interactions were found between the groups. The hypothesis that adolescent mothers' relationships with program providers would predict adolescent mother-child interactions was not supported. However, adolescent mothers who reported higher levels of trust and communication with a program provider or another important person in their lives were observed in higher quality physical and verbal interactions and higher quality organization of the child's activities. In addition, adolescent mothers who reported higher levels of trust were observed as being generally more available to their children. Finally, adolescent mothers who reported higher levels of communication with program providers or other persons appeared to enjoy their children more. The results suggest that for adolescent mothers, there appears to be a connection between the social network and parenting. Further research is necessary to continue exploring the importance of parenting programs in the social network of adolescent mothers. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 417 032

The Importance of Program Providers in Predicting Adolescent Mother-Child Interactions in a Center-Based Intervention

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Leslie Cooper Parsons

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Leslie Cooper Parsons and Sarah Pierce
Louisiana State University

Abstract

The study examined connections between the quality of the relationship adolescent mothers establish with parenting program providers and the quality of the interactions that adolescent mothers exhibit with their children. The study also compared adolescent mother-child interactions between adolescent mothers in a parenting program with those of adolescent mothers in a matched comparison group. No significant differences in interactions were found between the groups. However, adolescent mothers who reported higher levels of trust and communication with a program provider or another important person in her life were observed in higher quality physical and verbal interactions and higher quality organization of the child's activities.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescent mothers and their infants tend to fall into at-risk categories. Adolescent mothers are less likely to finish high school, attend college, and find stable employment than women who delay parenting (Brooks-Gunn & Furstenberg, 1986; Luster & Mittelstaedt, 1993).

Due to risk factors associated with adolescent parenting, many communities offer parenting programs to adolescent mothers. Evaluations of adolescent parenting programs focus on outcomes such as child development knowledge and high school completion (Clewell, et al., 1988), but have yet to examine connections between the adolescent mother's relationship with providers in a center-based parenting program and adolescent mother-child interactions. The purpose of the study was to compare the quality of the relationship adolescent mothers establish with parenting program providers with adolescent mother-child interactions. The study also compared adolescent mother-child interactions between adolescent mothers in a parenting program with those of adolescent mothers in a matched comparison group.

Method

Participants. The participants included 37 mother-child dyads. All mothers were unmarried adolescents. Twenty-two of the mothers were enrolled in a parenting program at a public high school and their children participated in an on-site early childhood education program. A comparison group consisted of 15 mothers, and one of each of their children, who attended a high school without a parenting program.

The Parenting Program. The center-based parenting program serves adolescent mothers who attend a public high school in an urban Southern city. In addition to child care and parenting classes, the program offers services including health care, self-sufficiency classes, teen pregnancy awareness, vocational training, and drop-out/suspension prevention programs.

Procedures. Each mother and child were videotaped during a 20-minute play session. Each dyad was provided with toys for a range of developmental levels. After the videotaping, each mother completed a questionnaire that contained questions examining the adolescent mother's relationship with a program provider or another person.

PS 026348

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Assessments. Data to assess the adolescent mother-child interactions were collected with the Parent/Caregiver Involvement Scale (Farran, Kasari, Comfort, & Jay, 1986). The P/CIS measures amount, quality and appropriateness across 11 dimensions of mother-child interactions: Physical Involvement, Verbal Involvement, Responsiveness of Caregiver, Play Interaction, Teaching Behavior, Control Over Child's Activities, Directives, Relationship Among Activities, Positive Statements, Negative Statements, and Goal Setting. A twelfth dimension, General Impression yields six scores: Availability, Acceptance, Atmosphere, Learning Environment, and Total Impression.

The questionnaire contained two instruments adapted for use in the present study. The instruments were adapted by substituting the term "the person" to represent the program provider or person to whom the adolescent mother felt closest, for the term "friend." The Measure of Interpersonal Trust for Use with Adolescents (MIT; Hestenes, 1997) has two subscales. The subscale Dependability Beliefs contains 17 items including: "How much does the person accept you no matter what you do?" The subscale Sharing Confidences contains six items including: "How often do you tell the person things you wouldn't tell anyone else?" Both subscales have shown high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha $\geq .89$) and construct validity (Hestenes, 1997).

The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment: Peers (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) assesses three constructs with 23 items that ask about adolescent mothers' feelings about their relationship with their friends. The word "person" was substituted for "friend" for the purposes of the study. The Trust subscale contains eight items including: "How often do you trust the person?" The Communication subscale contains nine items including: "How often do you tell the person about your problems and troubles?" The Alienation subscale contains six items including: "How often does it seem that the person is irritated with you for no reason?" The IPPA: Peers has shown internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha for trust =.91, for communication = .86, and for alienation = .72) and reliability (Armsden & Greenberg, 1991; Eberly, Montemayor, Andrews, Hascall, &Marshall, 1997).

Results

Acceptable Interrater reliability was obtained for 13 measures of the P/CIS that were combined to create seven variables: Responsiveness of mother to child, Availability of mother to child, Enjoyment of mother with child, Learning environment, Total Amount of interaction, Total Quality of interaction, and Total Impression of interaction. Five variables were derived from the Questionnaire: Sharing confidences, Dependability of other person, Communication with other person, Trust of other person, and Alienation from other person.

Independent sample t-tests were performed on the seven mother-child interaction variables and the five Relationship variables for the program and non-program participants. Differences were found for Sharing (see Table 1).

No correlations between the five relationship variables and the seven interaction variables for the 22 program participants achieved statistical significance. The data for the program participants and for the non-program participants ($n = 15$) were combined to increase the power of the test. There was a positive relationship between Communication and Total Quality, Trust and Total Quality, Trust of other person and Availability , and Communication and Enjoyment (see Table 2)

Discussion

The first hypothesis, that adolescent mothers' relationships with program providers would predict adolescent mother-child interactions, was not supported. This was attributed in part to the small sample

size. When a new hypothesis was formed, that adolescent mothers' relationships with program providers or another person would predict adolescent mother-child interactions with an increased sample, there were several statistically significant correlations. The adolescent mother-child interaction variable Total Quality, which includes physical involvement, verbal involvement, and relationship among activities, was significantly correlated with relationship characteristics of Communication and Trust. Adolescent mothers who reported higher levels of trust and communication with a program provider or another important person in her life were observed in higher quality physical and verbal interactions and higher quality organization of the child's activities. In addition, adolescent mothers who reported higher levels of trust were observed as being generally more available to their children. Finally adolescent mothers who reported higher levels of communication with program providers or other person were observed generally enjoying their children more.

These results fit with Belsky's (1984) model of the determinants of parenting. The communication and trust adolescent mothers report can be viewed as a component of their social network that is relating to the parenting as observed in the adolescent mother-child interactions. For adolescent mothers, there appears to be a connection between the social network and parenting. Further research is necessary to continue exploring the importance of parenting programs in the social network of adolescent mothers.

References

Armsden, G. C., & Greenberg, M. T. (1987). The inventory of parent and peer attachment: Individual differences and their relationship to psychological well-being in adolescence. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 16, 427-454.

Belsky, J. (1984). The determinants of parenting: A process model. Child Development, 55, 83-96.

Brooks-Gunn, J., & Furstenberg, F. F. (1986). The children of adolescent mothers: Physical, academic, and psychological outcomes. Developmental Review, 6, 224-251.

Clewell, B. C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Benasich, A. A. (1989). Evaluating child-related outcomes of teenage programs. Family Relations, 38, 201-209.

Eberly, M. B., Montemayor, R., Andrews, H., Hascall, S., & Marshall, P. (1997, April). Predicting the quality of attachment between parents and adolescents: A longitudinal Investigation. Poster session presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Washington, DC.

Farran, D. C., Kasari, C., Comfort, M., & Jay, S. (1986). The parent/caregiver involvement scale. Nashville: Vanderbilt University.

Hestenes, S. L. (1997, April). A measure of interpersonal trust for use with adolescents. Poster session presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Washington, DC.

Luster, T., & Mittelstaedt, M. (1993). Adolescent mothers. In T. Luster & L. Okagaki (Eds.), Parenting: An ecological perspective, (pp. 227-250). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Table 1

Means for Program and Non-Program Participants

Subscale	Participants (n = 22)	Non-Participants (n = 15)
Relationship with provider or other		
Sharing	21.32[a]	24.47[a]
Dependability	74.45	71.20
Communication	40.68	40.07
Trust	37.00	36.33
Alienation	23.86	23.00
Adolescent mother-child interactions		
Total amount	17.81	16.93
Total quality	9.45	9.80
Responsiveness	2.86	2.80
Available	2.95	2.80
Enjoyment	2.50	3.20
Learning	2.32	2.40
Total impression	12.86	15.00

[a] $t(2) = 2.23$, $p = .03$.

Table 2

Correlations Among Characteristics of Adolescent Mothers' Relationship with a Provider or Another Person and Adolescent Mother-Child Interactions

	Relationship Characteristics				
Adolescent Mother-Child Interactions	Sharing	Depend	Communi-cation	Trust	Alienation
Amount	.08	.05	.17	.19	-.08
Quality	.29	.16	.42*	.44*	.15
Responsiveness	-.16	-.05	.10	.11	.14
Available	.00	.05	.17	.34*	.22
Enjoyment	.30+	.00	.33*	.14	.10
Learning	-.03	-.11	.13	.14	.05
Total Impression	.25	.01	.30+	.22	.14

+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$.